



Forest Plan Revision News

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Message from the Forest Supervisor

As summer begins to fade and we get ready for another spectacular autumn in the U.P., it's a great time to contemplate what it means to have a National Forest in your backyard. The Ottawa National Forest is revising its Forest Plan—a “strategic” document that describes the goals and objectives of forest management, and how these goals and objects should be achieved.

As a starting point for deciding what things to revise in the existing Plan, the Ottawa has sought viewpoints from the general public, state and local governments, tribal governments and interested groups. We have been receiving comments for the past 18 months. We have received hundreds of written comments from the Great Lakes region and beyond.

Feedback we have received shows just how important the Ottawa is to many people. It also shows the wide spectrum of opinions that exist when it comes to management of our Forest. Our goal is to align our management activities to reflect the diverse needs and desires of our users, while providing for the health of the Ottawa.

The goal of this newsletter is to describe, in general terms, some of the alternative ways the Forest is considering changing the existing Forest Plan, using the comments we received as one source of data. The Revision Team is busy trying to quantify, map and in other ways describe these potential changes.

Finally, the other two National Forests in Michigan (the Hiawatha and the Huron-Manistee NF's) are also revising their Forest Plans on the same schedule as the Ottawa. If you would like more information about those two Forests, you can visit their website, or call us here on the Ottawa and we'll direct you to the best source for information. Enjoy the Fall colors!

Bob Lueckel



Developing a Range of Alternatives

All National Forests are required to develop and analyze a reasonable range of alternatives during Forest Plan Revision. These alternatives respond to the major “issues” that were identified over the past 1-1/2 years with extensive public input.

Each alternative developed will have a different approach to managing the Forest's resources over the next 10 to 15 years (when we will once again revise the Forest Plan).

Over the next several months, the Ottawa planning staff will be developing and refining these alternatives, which will then be analyzed in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). The DEIS will display and compare how each of the alternatives meets the overall goals of the Forest. We currently expect to publish these draft documents for formal public review and comment in the spring of 2005. Public meetings will also be held at that time.

The range of management options we are looking at that will drive the development of these alternatives are displayed on the following pages.

Proposed Range of Responses

Healthy Forests provide multiple benefits for everyone. Through Forest Plan revision, we will determine the long-term desired condition of the forest as we provide for the people who use it. This newsletter outlines a range of responses that we will use to address the major issues identified through public involvement. The following range of management options will drive alternative development.

Sustaining Ecosystems, Conditions and Uses

Alternatives will display changes in the location and patterns of forest types on the Forest. These alternatives will examine opportunities to improve the fit of our long-term management with the capability of forest ecosystems, to improve the habitat value of the forest for different species, and to improve the economic efficiency of our management. Timber management continues to be one of the most economically efficient tools managers use to restore the structure and ecological health of the forest, and to achieve other social and economic purposes. Alternatives will examine different maximum timber production levels. These levels will be linked to forest vegetation goals, providing resource protections, and addressing critical species habitats.

Forest Vegetation Composition. The current composition of vegetation and forest types on the Ottawa National Forest is a function of many factors. Perhaps the greatest factor was the “cutover” of the Forest in the late-1800’s to early 1900’s. Other factors include the ecological capability of the land, the impact of non-native invasive species, and the use and management of the forest by humans over time. These and other factors, coupled with our understanding and application of the best available science, are guiding us in developing alternative goals for the vegetative composition on the forest as follows:

- ▶ **Northern Hardwoods.** Hardwoods, such as sugar maple and yellow birch, will make up a larger percentage of the Forest acres under vegetation management than in the current Forest Plan.
- ▶ **Long-Lived Conifers.** Long-lived conifers, like hemlock, white pine, cedar and red pine, will make up a similar percentage of the Forest acres under management to that projected in the Forest Plan.
- ▶ **Short-Lived Conifers.** Short-lived conifers, including jack pine and balsam fir, will make up a smaller percentage of the Forest acres under vegetation management than projected in the Forest Plan.
- ▶ **Aspen.** The range of managed aspen acres projected in alternatives will range from near to somewhat less than the current Forest Plan projection of 138,000 acres. Alternatives will also examine different patterns of aspen forests within the Ottawa landscape.

Timber Management. Alternatives will also examine the type and mix of timber products that will be produced from the Forest, as well as the allowable sale quantity.

- ▶ **Allowable Sale Quantity (ASQ).** The ASQ will be linked to outcomes from vegetation goals, suitability assessment, species viability, and timber demand. Under the current plan, the ASQ is 78 MMBF/year.
- ▶ **Even-aged Management.** Acreage amounts for even-aged management, involving shelterwood and clearcut harvest types, will be less than the current plan ranging from low to moderate.
- ▶ **Uneven-aged Management.** Uneven-aged management, using single tree selection harvest in northern hardwoods, will increase from current plan amounts.
- ▶ **Timber Suitability.** We will review the acres of forest suited for timber in order to maintain soil productivity and high water quality based on improved mapping capability and new ecological information.



Other Topics in our Notice of Intent

Research Natural Areas. Research Natural Areas are areas within National Forests that the Forest Service has designated to be permanently protected and maintained in natural condition. Each alternative will maintain the existing designated RNA (located in the McCormick Wilderness area) and will include a review of our two candidate RNA's using new ecological information leading to a recommendation on the merits of proceeding toward establishment.

Management Indicator Species (MIS). Each alternative will establish objectives for the maintenance and improvement of habitat for four management indicator species. These species will be selected because their population changes are believed to indicate the effects of management activities.

Canada Lynx. Each alternative will provide direction that provides habitat and supports the conservation of the threatened Canada lynx.

Wilderness Area Review. As required by law, Forest personnel are conducting a roadless inventory of the Forest and will review any eligible areas for wilderness potential.

Water Resources. Each alternative will incorporate standards and guidelines designed to enhance protections in riparian areas, wetlands, streams and ponds.

Invasive Species. Each alternative will incorporate standards and guidelines that address treatment approaches, maintaining a list of species of concern, conducting inventories and determination of treatment priorities.

Species Viability. We are currently developing management objectives, standards, and guides to help ensure that each proposed alternative contributes to the viability of native and desirable species (both plant and animal).

New Monitoring Plan. The new Forest Plan will include within it an outline for monitoring the implementation and effectiveness of the management activities described. A monitoring report will be completed regularly.

Forest Access (ATV/ORV)

All Terrain Vehicle (ATV) use on the Ottawa is important to the area, both as a local use and as a growing recreation activity for people visiting from around the Great Lakes region. As we develop alternatives, we will consider guidelines that protect natural resources and are responsive to changing National Forest Service policy on ATV use.

ATV access in alternatives will vary from the current on-road and off-road opportunities of the current Forest Plan, to focused use on designated roads and trails. These alternatives will also vary in terms of links to other area ATV trails and services.

Other Forest News

As the Forest moves forward with our Forest Plan Revision, we are also working on the development of Comprehensive River Management Plans (CRMP) for previously designated Wild & Scenic Rivers (W&SR's) on the Forest.

These management plans will refine strategic direction and guide development, management and restoration activities on federal lands within W&SR corridors on the Ottawa. Management direction or river corridor changes will be incorporated into the revised Forest Plan, or as a future amendment.

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This newsletter has been produced by the Ottawa National Forest Planning Team to update you on the Forest Plan Revision process.

As we move into the alternative development phase of the revision process, we will continue to accept comments. Comments may be provided:

- **By Mail:** Ottawa National Forest, Attn: Forest Planning, E6248 US Hwy. 2, Ironwood, MI 49938
- **By E-Mail:** r9_ottawa_revision@fs.fed.us
- **In Person:** Supervisor's Office, E6248 US Hwy. 2, Ironwood, Michigan. Office hours are 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. (CST)
- **By Phone:** 906-932-1330

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